

Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice
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American Literature Time Machine: Toward a Democratic Canon in the Undergraduate Survey Course

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ABSTRACT: Students often enter American literature survey courses feeling removed from and uninspired by the texts that are chosen for them to read in syllabi and in the chronological approach of most literature anthologies. In this essay, Kait and Todd propose and lay out an alternative way to approach and teach a pre-1900 American Literature survey course: through a non-chronological progression based on students' choices of what texts and units to cover at which point in the semester. The essay interrogates the "myth of coverage" endemic to all survey courses and suggests ways to surface often-elided issues of canon-making and anthology creation. Todd and Kait discuss the possibilities (and practical drawbacks) of attempting to empower American literature students to play a more active role in their education and to make connections between early American culture and their own lives.

During finals week of Todd's fall 2015 American Literature to 1900 survey course at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, there was a racial incident at the university library. A student took a photo of several African American students and posted it on her Snapchat account with the caption "monkeys like to hang out in groups." Someone saw the post, took a screenshot of it, and circulated it on Facebook in order to bring attention to the issue. The President of the University sent a message condemning racism and improper behavior, and many African American students held protests and marches on campus.

In the final exam period, Todd exhorted students that such incidents show why we need to study literature, specifically literature of diverse voices from the past, if we intend to avoid repeating it. Todd mentioned Methodist minister and Pequot writer William Apess's "An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man" (1833), which directly addresses its white readership about the hypocrisy of racial bias, as a prime example of the type of work that the offending student, and all students, should be reading so as to interrogate critically their own prejudices and to nullify or respond thoughtfully to such hateful acts. (The class had read and enjoyed this piece in its "Native American Removal and Resistance" unit earlier in the term.) He also encouraged them to be activists in addition to scholars, to speak up against injustice while remembering the lessons of earlier American culture wars.

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As the ensuing final project presentations demonstrated, he needn't have bothered. The class had already internalized these lessons and applied them to their anthology and literary recovery projects. These projects recovered forgotten or neglected voices and put them into conversation with our world of 2015 or grouped together activist or subversive texts from American writers. Regardless of the topics they chose, these students were making pre-1900 American literature speak to their time as well as to its own. They were reimagining college curricula even as they finished their final required assignment for a required course. Or, to borrow terminology from bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), they were "interrogating biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination (such as racism and sexism) while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students" (10). In essence, this was the entire point of Todd's survey course, which, throughout the semester, worked to surface issues of canon: who's in, who's out, and who decides, at what points in history.

The Myth of Coverage and the Tyranny of the Timeline

One of Todd's learning goals was to unveil to students the myth of coverage created by a chronological approach attempting to "cover" 300 years' worth of literature in one academic term. The course did not proceed in chronological order; rather, the class was framed as an "American Literature Time Machine." The problem of chronology is not limited to the subfield of early American literature, but it is certainly amplified in pre-1900 survey courses in which instructors are asked to cover broader swaths of time than most. Gerald Graff believes the "field-coverage principle" used to "organize literature" has resulted in literature departments working as "aggregates to cover an array of historical and generic literary fields" (6). In early American survey courses, specifically, there is a pressure to teach literature chronologically as though they should simultaneously act as history courses (Graff 9). Attempting to tie together a cohesive narrative of literary history, we sometimes focus too narrowly on certain types of writers (i.e. white, male New Englanders) at the expense of the simultaneity and dizzying diversity of competing voices, languages, religions, and races that actually characterized the huge geographical area of the pre-1900 Americas. Or, as Cary Nelson puts it in the introduction to *Repression and Recovery*, his anthology of recovered modernist American poets, "literary history is generally addicted to

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narrative presentations that ignore diversity when it cannot be fitted into a coherent historical sequence" (7).

One aspect of diversity that American literature courses have tended to ignore, even as they feature more women and writers of color, is spatial diversity. That is, our textual selections tend to have a Northeastern bias that elides the larger, interconnected cultural history of the Americas. To demonstrate this fallacy, on the first day of class Todd asks his students to name the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American authors they know of and lists them on the board. (Usually students suggest a slew of twentieth-century or British authors, but eventually they mention canonical stalwarts like Thoreau, Hawthorne, Dickinson, and maybe Melville or Poe.) Todd then marks their hometowns on a map of the Americas circa 1840s, showing how small a geographical space (mostly Massachusetts) these authors cover. Todd then points to the course's list of potential readings (see Appendix A), which lists locations--including areas usually considered outside US canonical space, such as New Spain, the global South, or the Philippines--in addition to themes and time periods so that students may keep geographical diversity in mind when considering texts and textual selections.

Just as problematic with traditional approaches to survey courses is that a chronological approach tends to offer a false teleology: that is, it gives us the mistaken sense that each set of social circumstances that we read about has been directly influenced or caused by the previous time period that we studied, and are all moving inexorably toward some final, predetermined end. In addition to whitewashing the past and making it seem less diverse than it actually was, another result of such linearity is an anachronistic tendency to read the past through the present. For example, we might mistakenly ascribe to Puritans pre-revolutionary or proto-nationalist sentiments, naively view lands in Western North America as just waiting to be annexed to the U.S., and wrongly read antebellum literature through the lens of the Civil War and its aftermath. Although hindsight may be 20/20, it does not accurately account for past cultural production and cultural attitudes; it is essential to remember that history is always conditional, and early American writers and readers could not predict the future any more than we can today.

Rather than start in the 1600s and move straightforward in time to 1900, Todd asked the class to choose where, or, more accurately, when it wanted to begin. To achieve this,

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Todd and Kait (who was Todd's Graduate Assistant and worked with students in and out of class) attempted to create a democratic classroom that decided, through discussion and through voting, what authors and texts students would read and when (from a curated list of thematic groupings—see Appendix A). As Christina Katopodis has reflected on including students in the creation of her early American survey course, "Empowering students and fostering a sense of community in the classroom has an enormous impact on achieving learning outcomes." We, too, wanted to give students a sense of ownership of their learning experience by allowing them a significant role in selecting our next literary destinations through seeking thematic, formal, or social connections that had very little to do with linear time. In fall 2015, for example, the students chose the following units in this order: cultures of death in the 19th century, American poetry and poetics (Emerson and Whitman), African American folk tales in popular culture, Native American creation and contact stories, Native American removal and resistance, and women's literature and women's rights "time-hop." Thus we proceeded rhizomatically instead of chronologically.

Students as Canon-Makers

Students entered the class with an uncertain sense of the literary canon and how it changes (or doesn't) over time, not to mention how selections in anthologies are chosen. Indiana University of Pennsylvania is a large, less selective state university featuring a mix of students from rural Western Pennsylvania and urban areas in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Approximately three weeks into the semester, students were provided with an optional survey that asked them to describe their understanding of the canon, of anthologies and how they are created, and how their conceptions of these ideas had changed since the first week of class. Many students admitted to not understanding how a canon or an anthology was made, or expressed that they had heard of the notion but were unsure of how it was defined. Reactions to how their ideas had changed over the course of three weeks varied; while most recognized that canon and anthology creation was a significant and in-depth process, they were still unsure of how and why.

As students became more familiar with the concepts of canon and anthology, they began to recognize the significance of non-chronological study and came to embrace the more active role in directing their own educational experience through choosing units. In

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fact, Todd's fall 2015 class gained so much confidence in this regard that, in our discussion about next units at the mid-semester point, the students rebelled against the choices as structured in Todd's proposed unit options and suggested an alternative. Specifically, though Todd was careful to include women writers in many of the topics and text groupings, he did not include a discrete category of "women's literature." When one student pointed this out during our discussion of next steps, several others chimed in, rather vociferously, in support of creating this as a unit. One student explained that it would be interesting and valuable to learn how women writers dealt with gender inequality and issues of women's rights at different points in American history. Another suggested that we do so in reverse chronological order (from most to least recent and familiar), and offered our eventual title "women's literature and women's rights 'time hop'."

Todd and Kait were thrilled with how these students (1) mounted a reasoned challenge to the professor and the canon he had implicitly structured through textual groupings, (2) offered a thoughtful alternative, and (3) used collaborative conversation to provide a structure for it that met the course's general approach and goals. After listening to the types of texts the class said they wanted to read, Todd offered some further input to Kait, who then created a three-day unit. We started on the first day in the 1890s with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Why I wrote the Yellow Wallpaper," discussing women's mental health and the rest cure. The second day took us to the 1840s and 1850s with two wildly variant styles of agitation for women's rights: selections from Margaret Fuller's transcendentalist treatise *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and three Fanny Fern newspaper columns ("Male Criticism on Ladies Books," "Law More Nice Than Just," and "Independence"). On the third day we went back to the late 1700s and mid-1600s, pairing Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America" with Anne Bradstreet's "The Prologue [To Her Book]" and "Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666."

One student later explained in a voluntary interview that, while they had previously studied Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a foundational text of women's rights, they had never encountered or read Fanny Fern and her comedic approach to women's issues. The non-chronological approach permitted this student to get a broader sampling of women's writing between the 17th and 19th centuries, and, as they put it, "We didn't just say, 'OK,

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this is Perkins Gilman's work and she sort of represents everything,' we actually got deeper into it."¹ Additionally, moving backwards in time from the 1890s to the 1600s seemed to shock students into a recognition of the historical persistence of problems and prejudices faced by women and women writers over the centuries.

As the student's "got deeper" into the texts they chose, we all worked to historicize each time and place that we visited in order to more accurately understand the stakes of reading and writing in different times and places throughout pre-1900 Americas. This was mostly achieved through brief (10-12 minute) historical context group presentations in which students researched and presented on a particular topic and time period related to the reading (for example, the rest cure when reading "The Yellow Wallpaper," cultures of death in the 19th century when reading Poe and Dickinson). We also wanted to show students how clearly early American literature and culture speaks to their own historical moment, and so in our lesson planning we were conscious to create moments of historical concordance and overlap. For instance, in reading Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Poet" we attempted to understand the essay and Emerson's aphoristic style through recourse to that most twenty-first-century phenomena, Twitter. There are several Twitter accounts dedicated to dispensing nuggets of Emerson's wisdom in 140 characters or less. After reviewing those feeds, we asked students to identify a key "tweetable" quote from "The Poet," and Todd collected them in a document as students with Twitter accounts tweeted their favorites (one student, it turns out, had already taken to Twitter with her favorite quotes before class, which shows just how closely this activity aligns with ways that students process texts in the 2010s.) We then read through our collected quotes and determined as a class what the main takeaways were in terms of poetics and philosophy. These we applied in our next meeting to Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," which we situated as in part Whitman's response to Emerson's call for a truly American poet. Though it was not assigned, several students tweeted their favorite Whitman quotes as well. Kait and Todd were gratified at students' use of this technology as a way to understand the material and to connect it to their own overstuffed lives.

¹ This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

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For the course's two exams, Todd continued student-directed collaborative learning by asking students to write potential exam questions (short-answer questions, key passages for identification and analysis mini-essays, and key literary and socio-historical terms from in-class discussion). Drawing from the assumption that the class should play a role in determining key takeaways from each reading and discussion, and that these determinations should be reflected in evaluative instruments like exams, for each exam Todd created a study guide based in part on students' questions and terms and walked through these as a means of review. The study guide and review session thus represented a corpus of collaboratively produced knowledge about the literature they had studied. So Todd made sure to include at least some of these questions (reworded to clarify and specify) and passages on the tests. Before returning graded exams, Todd created a "student-generated answer key" for which he typed up examples of responses to short answer questions and identification and analysis passages that received full credit. This showed students how different approaches to the same material can be deemed "correct" as well as that they and their peers were capable of producing nuanced, articulate responses. Such valuing of the multiplicity of perspectives aligns with the overall approach of the class, as described above.

For the last two weeks of class, Todd assigned no new readings. Instead, students were to work, alone or in groups, on a summative project that required them to engage more directly with the details and politics of canon-making: how canons get established and re-shaped, what types of texts are embraced or forgotten at what moments in history, and why. First Todd led a discussion on canons and literary recovery through a collection of quotes by scholars such as Judith Fetterly, Jane Tompkins, Cary Nelson, and Karen Kilcup. The idea here was to once again foreground the constructed-ness of canons (and anthologies) through literary critics wrestling with these ideas. Todd asked students to connect quotes from these critics to what we had done in the class so far and to their final projects. For instance, Tompkins asserts in *Sensational Designs* that "'Literature' is not a stable identity, but a category whose outlines and contents are variable" (109); similarly, Judith Fetterly muses in "Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and the Politics of Recovery" on how advances in literary study have "extended our definition of American literature" historically and geographically to new objects of study (600). We connected these

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insights to our class's choice to read African American folktales, Native American origin stories, and Fanny Fern's newspaper columns, none of which had been considered precisely "literary" by contemporary audiences or earlier generations of scholars and therefore rarely were included in anthologies used in college classrooms. Through Cary Nelson we considered how "the literary and social history we promulgated as sufficient in fact suppressed an immense amount of writing of great interest, vitality, subtlety, and complexity....Literary history thus told a selective story substantially constituted by its cultural presuppositions and restricted by its ideological filters" (5-6). With this in mind, we thought through what voices we wished to recover and why, what our own ideological assumptions were in recovering or selecting texts, and how to be honest about those assumptions while still trying to tell a "true" story about American literary history.

Then Todd and Kait introduced the two options for a final project: students could either create an anthology or recover a long-out-of-print work of American literature. Asking students to engage in their own canon-making by imagining alternative anthologies (of pre-1900 American literatures) recursively promotes alternative pedagogies like our own "Time Machine" approach. Anthology projects such as this one have proven successful in other early American survey courses. For instance, Melissa Dennihy has written about how, in her survey course, students create their own anthologies to read over the course of the semester. This, Dennihy claims, ensures students' interest in the course while demonstrating how anthologies are ultimately physical entities created by the social and cultural ideologies of the editors producing them (24). Similarly, Laura Aull has found success with having her students study the apparatuses of anthologies, which demonstrates how certain texts are grouped in succession, an outcome of teaching literature course chronologically. For instance, Aull mentions that "one student noted how the 'Beginnings to 1700' portion of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature* shaped an interpretation of texts that followed, by settlers, as incomplete—as only part of the story, while indigenous texts were lost or destroyed" (508). Similarly, allowing students the benefit of determining what we read, and when we read it, led them to understand the fact that what literature anthologies include and exclude actually reveals more about their contemporary moment of production than it does about the historical era covered.

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For Todd's class's anthology project, students determine the best way to organize their selected works and which excerpts (or whole works) to include and why. They articulate what ties the works together, what "story" their anthology tells about pre-1900 American culture, what makes their anthology different, and who the audience for it is. For the headnotes, they must determine and research background information that the intended readership might need to know about a work in order to read it properly; that is, as editors they need to decide how to shape their readers' interpretations of their selected texts. To complete the project, each group (or individual) had to produce

- (1) a table of contents with 7-10 works organized in a cogent way;
- (2) 2-4 brief (1-2 double-spaced pages each) headnotes introducing the author and/or historical or cultural circumstances, justifying textual selections, and explaining the importance of this excerpt;
- (3) an introduction to the anthology (3-5 pages double-spaced plus a Works Cited page) that explains the selection criteria, unifying theme, and goals of the anthology; and
- (4) a brief presentation during the final exam period, as mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

The other final-project option was a literary recovery project, wherein students (again in groups or alone) identified and read a work that had not been published in a new edition or widely anthologized in the last 100 years. They then had to write a proposal for a scholarly edition of this text. The project included

- (1) a 3-4 page proposal in which students made a case for how and why this particular text is "worthy" of recovery, identify what role it could play in college English classrooms (or ongoing scholarly discussions), and briefly outline what would need to be done to produce a useful scholarly edition of this text;
- (2) a 1-page outline of a scholarly introduction to the work;
- (3) a bibliography of critical works for further reading; and
- (4) 7-8 contextualizing annotations.

Students, of course, struggled with the practical nuts and bolts of recovery: how, they accurately wondered, could they rescue a literary work that had been forgotten or neglected if that neglect necessarily meant that they had never heard of it? To help them through this conundrum, Todd and Kait encouraged students identify their interests—ie.,

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which voices they wanted to recover and why—and pushed them in the right directions based on those interests, in part by perusing with them such resources as the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*; *The Cambridge History of American Literature*; Eric Sundquist's *Empire and Slavery in American Literature, 1820-1865*; Shirley Samuels's *A Companion to American Fiction, 1780-1865*; and Robert Paul Lamb and G.R. Thompson's *A Companion to American Fiction, 186-1914*. Todd and Kait also helped students verify (with the help of the WorldCat catalog and, yes, even Amazon) whether scholarly editions of these works had appeared in the last century.²

The Perils of Time Travel

There are, of course, some potential limitations to offering students the option to choose their own reading units and canon-making final projects through a time-machine approach. First are the problems inherent in democracy itself, namely that one doesn't always get what one wants. In a flipped classroom, this is true even for the instructor. Some votes are highly predictable. Each of the three times Todd has taught a version of this course (2012, 2013, 2015), the class has expressed an interest in the morbid and, as a result, selected as its first choice a unit called "Cultures of death in 19th Century American literature," featuring work by Poe and Dickinson. It is not Todd's favorite unit to teach, and the authors featured certainly are not the best way to upend students' sense of the canon to begin the term. Indeed, Poe and Dickinson may be among the only authors students have heard of among their initial choices, which might also influence their decision-making. This hypothesis is buttressed by the fact that another unit, "Poetry and nation-making"—which features Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Poet" and Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," two texts quite commonly taught in standard survey courses—is another popular choice, having been selected in two of the three years the course was taught. Depending on the units offered for students to select from, there is a real chance that students could, consciously or subconsciously, reify a canon of famous, white, Northeastern, male authors, thus subverting the intended subversiveness of the course structure. To attempt avoiding this, on "voting

² For more on literary recovery projects scalable from introductory literature courses for non-majors through graduate seminars, see Todd Nathan Thompson and Joseph Morgan, "Pedagogy of the Suppressed: Teaching Hemispheric Recovery." "Pedagogy of the Suppressed: Teaching Hemispheric Recovery."

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days" Todd raised issues of representativeness--in terms of time period, geography, race, gender, religion, genre, etc.--as something to keep in mind while nominating, justifying, and voting on texts to study.

Because in democracy majority rule does not always align with or protect individual choices, letting students choose their reading also risks alienating some students. That is, students—having been conditioned to see their professor as an authority figure and subject-matter expert—might be just fine with reading whatever that professor decided was important to read, but more resentful or disinterested in pursuing their neophyte peers' preferences. Here, too, reasoned discussion before voting helps to minimize such resentments. Before "voting days," Todd instructed students to go home, study the options (and/or create other options), and come to class ready to make a reasoned case to their peers for what the class should study next and why. This gives students agency in exploring and articulating their own interests and allows them, at least, to feel heard about their preferences, even if the class ultimately goes in a different direction.

Another potential drawback of the time machine organization is potentially more troublesome and more difficult to mollify: historical confusion. Of course, the point in jumping from one time to another is not to elide all time periods or to ignore historical difference, but rather to avoid the too-easy historical narrative of a false teleology of national development, as described above. The idea is that each discrete unit and historical moment we study should be historicized more precisely than simply seeing it as a reaction to or continuation of what came before it. For example, though we identified and discussed direct influence—e.g. Whitman's inspired response to Emerson's "The Poet"—we also tried to minimize any sense that these writers were either full inheritors of the Puritan cultural mantle or somehow fully representative of mid-nineteenth century cultural production; Fanny Fern, for one, might suggest otherwise.

In Todd's classes the responsibility to historicize each set of texts was given in large part to "historical context presentation" groups assigned to research and present on a particular topic to help contextualize the reading. The syllabus description of this assignment encouraged students to "offer a 'touch of the real'" and "help the class to understand and to feel *what life was like* when the author was writing and when and where the piece took place." But, in all three terms in which the course was taught, some

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presentations did this well and some did not; the difference usually had to do with the preparation and skills of the students constituting each group. Of course, Todd (and, in 2015, Kait as well) was prepared to add in missing details, but at times there was too much else to do in a class period to fully historicize. This, combined with jumping back and forth across vast swaths of time, led to some understandable but nonetheless considerable confusion about who was writing when. For instance, in the unit created by the 2015 class—"women's rights and women's literature time-hop" described above—some students conflated several of these time periods, seeing Wheatley as a Puritan or Bradstreet as a Romantic. Such misperceptions can lead to useful discussions about historical difference as well as assessments about how, when dealing with racial and gender politics, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." But Kait and Todd were a tad startled by these mistakes, especially since the reason we wanted to time travel in the first place was to avoid an oversimplified view of history. Because we were both trained in more chronological, canonical survey courses, we do not know whether to correlate such historical misunderstandings to the non-chronological movement of our reading schedule or simply to the difference between their levels of interest and expertise and our own.

There are practical considerations as well that might complicate implementing a student-chosen, time-machine approach for American literature survey courses. The three times that Todd has prepared and presented his course in this way, he has only been assigned to teach one section of the survey course for that term. The method described here certainly works better under such circumstances. But what about instructors who are assigned to teach multiple sections of the survey? Letting each section choose its own texts and order would inevitably lead to discrepancies between the sections, resulting in increased prep time for instructors who would then have to read separate texts and prepare discrete lessons for each section, each class period. Additionally, urging students to produce their own exam questions based on a stable of shared knowledge might lead to huge increases in grading time.³ Would the payoffs in terms of student agency and investment be "worth" the doubled or, if one taught three sections, tripled prep work? Maybe

³ Furthermore, some faculty are themselves limited in their selections of course materials, not at liberty to assign their textbooks of choice, or even, in some cases, their own syllabi. In these cases, Kait and Todd recognize, the pedagogical methods explored here might be impossible.

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not, given the various and ever-increasing teaching, service, and scholarship demands put on faculty. We can imagine a hybrid approach in such cases wherein each section would hold its own discussions and votes about choosing texts and times, and then the instructor would tabulate total votes from multiple sections in order to determine subsequent units. But, though this would eliminate the problem of multiple preps, it might do so at the cost of reducing students' sense of ownership of their curriculum, their sense of taking shared responsibility with their peers as twenty-first-century canon-makers.

Conclusion: Canon Deconstruction and Student Engagement

Despite such potential problems with a non-chronological approach to the early-American survey, the benefits abound, as evidenced by self-reported student engagement. By midterm, students had begun to recognize the difference between canon and anthology and how anthologies can be useful as an introduction to new topics for students. One student even expressed frustration with our own *Heath Anthology*: "I like this anthology. I just wish it came in color. Even half of the African American tales were written by white men. You've got to be kidding me! I'm sure other anthologies do a worse job of being intersectional, but it's still frustrating to think that only American literature that counts is the stuff written about other things as told by white guys." Such sentiments demonstrate the extent to which students became more confident with questioning how canons and anthologies often dictate the way American literature survey courses are constructed.

During spring semester, after all students' grades were submitted, Kait constructed and distributed a final, optional Qualtrics Survey and conducted in-person interviews (see Appendix B) with students who agreed to discuss their experience in the course. According to the survey, 80% of the nine survey participants (of 25 class members) would take literature survey courses more often if they were structured non-chronologically. 100% of survey participants agreed that voting on the reading schedule allowed them to play a more active role in the class, and 80% said they would take more literature survey courses if they were always provided the option of having an active role in selecting the course readings. Survey responses also indicated that the anthology/recovery project was successful as a wrap-up to the time-machine approach. All students who participated agreed that if they were to retake the course they would prefer to keep the final anthology/recovery project, as

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it helped them to understand the anthology-making process, including how anthology creators choose the readings they include. One student anonymously shared that they felt the anthology project allowed them to recognize how an anthology "wasn't strictly a collection of work in chronological order, but rather promoting a specific theme or message to the readers based on the selections"; another stated that creating an anthology helps students "think about important themes in literature instead of just creating a timeline based work." Freeing themselves from the tyranny of the timeline led these students to think critically about not just literature and history, but also the contingency of how literary history has been, can be, and should be presented to and by them and future generations of American literature students. More importantly, the curricular choices they made empowered them to respond thoughtfully to incidents of injustice on their own campus as well as in the world beyond it.⁴

⁴ Kait and Todd would like to thank Dr. Jessica Showalter, of Penn State Libraries, for her thorough and thoughtful reading of a draft of this essay.

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Appendix A: American Literature Time Machine Destinations

Note: We will construct a specific calendar—with readings, activities, and presentations—for each destination. Note that we will not be able to cover all of these topics during the semester. All page numbers refer to the Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th edition.

YEAR(S)	LOCATION(S)	TOPICS	TEXT, AUTHORS, PAGE #'S	DAY(S)
Various	Native America	Creation and Contact	Various Native American creation and contact accounts (A: 20-84)	2-3
1536-1692	New Spain	Exploration, contact, captivity, destruction	Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca , from <i>Relacion</i> (A: 147-161) and handouts Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz , poems (A: 240-49) "The Coming of the Spanish and the Hopi Revolt" (A: 259-263)	1-2
1630-1741	Massachusetts	Puritanism	John Winthrop , "A Model of Christian Charity" (A: 380-89) Ann Bradstreet , "The Prologue"(A: 439-441), "The Author to Her Book" (A: 445), "Before the Birth of One of Her Children" (448-49), "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Anne Bradstreet..." (A: 450-51), "Upon the Burning of Our House..." (A: 451-452) Mary Rowlandson , from <i>A Narrative of the Captivity...</i> (A: 480-514) Cotton Mather , from <i>The Wonders of the Invisible World</i> (A: 552-560) Jonathan Edwards : "Personal Narrative" (A: 711-722), "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (A: 723-735)	4-5
1728-	Virginia, North	Colonial	William Byrd II , from <i>The History of the</i>	1

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1841	Carolina	culture and satire	<i>Dividing Line</i> and <i>The Secret History of the Dividing Line</i> (A: 665-685)	
1747-1790	Pennsylvania	"Doing well by doing good" in British colonial America	Benjamin Franklin , "The Way to Wealth" (A: 910-19), "The Speech of Polly Baker" (A: 920-22), "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America" (A: 927-931), "On the Slave-Trade" (A: 931-33), <i>Autobiography</i> , Parts 1-3 (A: 935-998) J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur , from <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> (A: 1006-1045)	4
1787-1819	New York	Post-revolution comedy	Royall Tyler , <i>The Contrast</i> (A: 1401-48) Washington Irving , "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (B: 2519-41)	3
1789	Africa, South Carolina, England, Caribbean	Transatlantic slavery	Olaudah Equiano , <i>The Interesting Narrative</i> (A: 1259-1297)	1
1824-1855	Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, etc.	Indian removal and resistance	Mary Jemison , from <i>Narrative of the Life</i> (B: 1580-1612) Black Hawk , from <i>Life of Black Hawk</i> (B: 1612-19) Seattle , "Speech of Chief Seattle" (B: 1639-43) Catharine Maria Sedgwick , from <i>Hope Leslie</i> (B: 2566-82) William Apess , "An Indian Looking Glass for the White Man" (B: 1797-1802) On Indian Removal (B: 2422-29) William Cullen Bryant , "The Prairies" (B: 3172-75)	3
1845-1848	Texas, Mexico, New Mexico	US-Mexico War	John L. O'Sullivan , "Annexation" (1720-26)	1

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			<p>James Russell Lowell, from <i>The Biglow Papers</i> (1726-31)</p> <p>Frederick Douglass, "The War with Mexico" (1731-34)</p> <p>U.S. Congress and United Mexican States (1734-37)</p>	
1830s-1865	Michigan, Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas	Frontier humor	<p>Caroline Kirkland, from <i>A New Home, Who Who'll Follow?</i> (B: 2582-2603)</p> <p>"Humor of the Old Southwest" (B: 2484-2505)</p> <p>Mark Twain, "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" (C: 76-83)</p>	3
1838-1862	Virginia, New York, Massachusetts	Cultures of death in 19c American literature	<p>Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven" (B: 2764-2767), "Ligeia" (B: 2691-2706), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (B: 2706-2720), "Philosophy of Composition" (B: 2745-54)</p> <p>Emily Dickinson, selected poems TBA</p>	2
1841-1854	Massachusetts	Transcendentalism, then and now	<p>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (B: 1822-25, 1868-87)</p> <p>Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (B: 1976-96), from <i>Walden</i> (B: 1996-2025 plus handout)</p> <p>Margaret Fuller, from <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century</i> (B: 1940-66)</p>	4
1845-1852	Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky, South America, etc.	Slavery and freedom, revolts, the Fugitive Slave Law	<p>Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life</i> (B: 2163-2235)</p> <p>Harriet Beecher Stowe, from <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> (B: 2770-2815 plus handout)</p> <p>Herman Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i> (B: 2846-50, 2897-2962)</p>	6
1844-1855	New York	Poetry and nation-making	<p>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet" (B: 1887-1904)</p> <p>Walt Whitman, "Preface to Leaves of</p>	3

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			Grass" (B: 3218-3238), "Song of Myself" (B: 3238-3287), "Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson" (1409-1416)	
1862-1865	New York, Washington, D.C.	Civil War poetry	Walt Whitman , from <i>Drum-Taps</i> (B: 3306-3312), "When Lilacs Last..." (B: 3312-19) Herman Melville , from <i>Battle-Pieces</i> (B: 3040-3041) Abraham Lincoln , "Address ...at Gettysburg" (B: 2393-4)	2
1852-1892	Ohio, Wisconsin, Maine, California	Rural life	Alice Cary , from <i>Clovernook</i> (B: 3076-3099) Sarah Orne Jewett , "A White Heron" (C: 341-352) Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton , from <i>The Squatter and the Don</i> (C: 570-581) Hamlin Garland , "Up the Coulé" (C: 484-517)	3
1865-1890s	U.S. South	African American folktales, black and white	African American Folktales (C: 674-694) Joel Chandler Harris , from <i>Uncle Remus</i> (C: 694-98), "Free Joe and the Rest of the World" (C: 698-707) Thomas Nelson Page , "Marse Chan" (C: 707-25) Charles Chesnutt , "The Goophered Grapevine" (C: 725-27, 733-42), "Po' Sandy" (C: 742-50)	2-3
1870s-1890s	U.S. and world	Immigration and the "melting pot"	From " Chinese Exclusion Act " (C: 832-33) Thomas Nast , "E Pluribus Unum (Except the Chinese)" (C: 833) Emma Lazarus , "The New Colossus" (C: 834) Finley Peter Dunne , "Immigration" (C:	2-3

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			843-46) Edith Maud Eaton , "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian" (C: 846-57), from Mrs. Spring Fragrance (C: 857-64), "The Wisdom of the New" (C: 864-79) Abraham Cahan , "The Imported Bridegroom" (C: 897-944)	
1890s	U.S., Philippines	Spanish American War, the Philippines, colonialism	From " Interview with President McKinley " (C: 815-16) Mark Twain , from "To the Person Sitting in the Darkness" (C: 822-29), " The War Prayer " (C: 131-34) "Empire, Independence, and Self-Definition: Voices from the Philippines" (C: 972-99) George Ade , "Sultan of Sulu" (comic opera, Moodle link)	4
After 1865	Various locations	Post-bellum fiction	Choose from one of the following: John W. De Forest , <i>Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty</i> Louisa May Alcott : <i>Work: A Story of Experience</i> Mark Twain , <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> Edward Bellamy , <i>Looking Backward</i> Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis , <i>Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas</i> Charlotte Perkins Gilman , <i>Herland</i>	4
Various	Various	Literary adaptation	Choose from one of the following pairings: Edgar Allan Poe's novel <i>Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym</i> (1838) and Mat Johnson's novel <i>Pym</i> (2011) James Fenimore Cooper's novel <i>Last</i>	6-7

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			<i>of the Mohicans</i> (1826) and Michael Mann film <i>Last of the Mohicans</i> (1992) Solomon Northup's book <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i> (1853) and Steve McQueen's film <i>12 Years a Slave</i> (2013)	
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Appendix B: Post-Course Qualtrics Survey and Interview Questions

Questions 2, 4, and 14 provided space for students to expand on their answers

Survey (Qualtrics) Questions:

Please take your time answering these questions and provide as much detail in your answers as possible.

1. Having taken ENGL 212 - American Literature to 1900 through a non-chronological approach (AKA: The Time Machine), do you feel as though your understanding of the canon has changed?

Yes, Maybe or No.

2. Having taken ENGL 212: American Literature to 1900 through a non-chronological approach (AKA: The Time Machine Approach), do you feel as though your understanding of anthology creation has changed?

Yes, Maybe or No.

3. If you can remember, which of the following did you vote for in the first reading selection? Poetry and the Nation; African-American Folktales; 19th Century Death Culture; I don't remember.

4. At the midterm (around October 5th) the class voted on a new group of texts to read. Which of the following did you vote for?

Creation and Contact Tales; Women's Literature; Indiana Removal and Resistance.

5. Why did you vote for the selection you chose?

Fill in the blank answer.

6. Explain how choosing what you read made you feel about the subject.

Fill in the blank answer.

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7. Did voting on the reading schedule allow you to feel as though you had a more active role in the course outcome?

Yes, Maybe, or No.

8. Would you vote to keep the anthology project a course assignment?

Yes, Maybe, or No.

9. How do you feel creating your own anthology helped you to understand how anthologies and the canon are connected?

Fill in the blank.

10. Would you be more likely to take other survey literature courses if they used a non-chronological structure (AKA: Time Machine approach?)

Fill in the blank.

Interview Questions:

1. Did you have any pre-conceptions of early American literature before coming to this class? If so, what?

2. Did you have preconceptions of how you thought the professor would teach the class before beginning?

3. Approaching Early American Literature from the Time Machine Approach, did it change anything for you in any other ways?

4. Can you explain which texts you voted for on the selection days and why you read them?

5. Do you think picking the texts allow for a more diverse selection of readings?

6. What aspects of early American lit do you think were more emphasized when students were allowed to pick the reading?

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